

January 1~~5~~², 2007

Dear Members of the Iowa Assembly:

The Iowa Department of Economic Development (IDED) is pleased to report on the provision of on-going efforts to coordinate regulatory assistance for the state of Iowa. This report fulfills the following provision of Iowa Code, Chapter 15E.19:

“By January 15 of each year, the Department of Economic Development shall submit a written report to the General Assembly regarding the provision of regulatory assistance by the state agencies, including the Department’s efforts, and its recommendations and proposed solutions to streamline the process of issuing permits to business.”

Iowa Code, Chapter 15E.19 also directs IDED to coordinate regulatory assistance for the state of Iowa. Each agency responsible for programs that regulate business is required to establish a “Business Assistance Coordinator” or “Regulatory Assistance Coordinator” within the office of the agency director or the agency’s administrative division to work with IDED to:

- Serve as the regulatory agency's primary contact for regulatory affairs with IDED
- Provide information on regulatory requirements to businesses and represent the regulatory agency to the private sector
- Monitor permit applications and provide timely permit status information to IDED
- Require that regulatory agency staff participate in negotiations and discussions with businesses, and
- Notify IDED of proposed rulemaking activities and any changes to a regulatory program.

Assistance Network

IDED provides a centralized, confidential, and key point of contact to help citizens, small business, and industry access and communicate with state regulatory agencies. Working with business assistance coordinators the IDED has established a network (the Iowa Business Assistance Network) to help ensure efficient and timely response to inquiries about regulatory issues by state government.

Designation by each regulatory agency of a business or regulatory assistance coordinator supports IDED efforts to ensure that communication and service is coordinated and available to respond to assistance inquiries in a timely manner. It is also vital to supporting strategic efforts to streamline regulatory processes that cross multiple agency boundaries. Providing this assistance has had results which include the following:

- Reducing the regulatory burden on businesses and individuals subject to regulation by providing a single point of contact to assist in identifying compliance requirements and “expert” agency contacts and resources.
- Guiding economic development projects and clients effectively through regulatory processes using a synchronized process that provides pre-application consultation and assistance from project start to completion.
- Responding to inquiries originating with IDED (that require response and assistance by other agencies) generally within one business day or less.

- Expanding the role of the small business air quality liaison to “full-service” making assistance with land and water quality regulations also available.
- Establishing a “one-stop” assistance portal at <http://regassist.iowa.gov> to assist citizens and business to more readily find help, information and key contacts.
- Working in cooperation with the legislature and other state agencies to make understanding, tracking and participating in the administrative rule making process more transparent by developing www.iowadminrules.gov.
- Assisting state agencies to host business process “kaizen” improvement events focused on streamlining regulatory processes, including the air quality construction permit process, peace office application system, and “construction regulation reinvention.”
- Developing a communications toolkit of online fact sheets available at http://www.iowalifechanging.com/business/publications_directories.html that provide information on frequently requested topics including: “Structuring Your New Business,” “Site Development and Expansion,” and compliance assistance for specific sectors such as for the renewable fuels industry.
- Building internal capacity and understanding of the need for competitive responsiveness by regulatory agencies by providing joint learning opportunities on regulatory processes impacting businesses in areas including: food safety; business start-up; worker health and safety; professional occupation licensing; historic building code; state of Iowa building code and construction regulation; health care facility licensing; homeland security and emergency management, and workers compensation and unemployment trust funds.
- Leveraging inter-agency efforts in areas such as “Guidance for Employers,” “Reinventing Construction Regulation” and Compliance Assistance for the Renewable Fuels Industry.”
- Promoting cooperation among regulatory agencies in administrative rulemaking when jurisdictions overlap or are closely related and providing information about another agency’s regulatory requirements. This includes referrals across agency lines and providing specific points of contact in agencies whose regulatory requirements may affect a particular project or business. Two specific examples of recent cooperation in rulemaking are coordination between the Labor Commissioner and the Fire Marshal on fire safety requirements for elevators and between the Departments of Natural Resources and Public Safety on requirements for equipment for dispensing E-85.

Coordination between IDED and regulatory agencies sends a positive message concerning Iowa’s competitive business climate and the ability of Iowa state government to act as an effective business partner.

In 2007 IDED will continue its assistance partnership with the state regulatory agencies and focus on making its assistance available to economic development organizations. The following initiatives are planned or under consideration:

- Additional process improvement efforts using Kaizen breakthrough methodology such as streamlining the provision of environmental assistance.

- Improving access to and the responsiveness of regulatory assistance through the innovative application of technology. Among the projects under consideration are the following:
 - Improving the “one-stop” regulatory assistance portal
 - Developing quarterly list serve updates of upcoming regulatory program changes
 - Establishing a virtual one-stop shop for identifying regulatory requirements for construction projects, created as a “sub-portal” of the state regulatory assistance portal, and
 - Creating additional tip sheets summarizing regulatory requirements and assistance.
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Sincerely,

Mike Blouin
Director
Iowa Department of Economic Development